

What is claimed is:

1. A method for displaying a first graphical image corresponding to a user interface for an application program running in a computer system, wherein the first graphical image comprises the external boundary of the visible user interface, comprising:

defining the first graphical image in a first computer file;

processing a second computer file comprising a plurality of parameters corresponding to the first graphical image; and

processing the first computer file in accordance with the plurality of parameters to display the first graphical image.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the first computer file comprises a plurality of graphical images and each of the plurality of graphical images corresponds to one of a plurality of states of the user interface.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the plurality of parameters define a plurality of activation regions corresponding to the first graphical image.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the second computer file comprises a location definition and an activation region type for each of the plurality of activation regions.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the activation region type for at least one of the plurality of activation regions points to a third computer file comprising a plurality of parameters corresponding to a second graphical image, wherein the second graphical image is defined in a fourth computer file.

6. The method of claim 2 wherein the plurality of states of the user interface comprises a default state, a selected state, and an activated state.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the processing of the first computer file further comprises:

defining a polygon corresponding to an external boundary of the first graphical image;

storing information regarding the polygon in the computer system; and

partitioning the first graphical image into transparent and visible color regions using the information regarding the polygon.

8. A computer readable storage medium containing computer executable code for instructing a computer to operate as follows:

defining a first graphical image in a first computer file, the first graphical image corresponding to a user interface for an application program running on the computer, wherein the first graphical image comprises the external boundary of the visible user interface;

processing a second computer file comprising a plurality of parameters corresponding to the first graphical image; and

processing the first computer file in accordance with the plurality of parameters to display the first graphical image.

9. A computer system comprising a client computer and a server computer wherein the client computer and server computer are each operable to execute the method of claim 1.

10. A computer system, having a memory, for displaying a graphical image corresponding to a user interface for an application program, wherein the graphical image comprises the external boundary of the visible user interface, comprising:

a first computer file stored in the memory defining the graphical image;

and a second computer file stored in the memory defining a plurality of parameters for processing the first computer file to display the graphical image.

11. The computer system of claim 10 further comprising a graphics engine computer program running in the computer system and operable to read the second computer file for processing the first computer file.

12. A computer system for executing a process for an application program having a user interface wherein:

the process manages a plurality of corresponding graphics file and configuration file pairs; and

each of the plurality of corresponding graphics file and configuration file pairs corresponds to a window that forms at least a portion of the user interface.

13. The computer system of claim 12 wherein the plurality of corresponding graphics file and configuration file pairs defines substantially the entire user interface for the application program.

14. A method comprising developing for a third party an application program for executing a process on a computer system wherein:

the process manages a plurality of corresponding graphics file and configuration file pairs; and

each of the plurality of corresponding graphics file and configuration file pairs corresponds to a window that forms at least a portion of the user interface.

15. A computer system for executing a process for an application program for processing a configuration file that points to a corresponding graphics file for displaying a window in a user interface for the application program wherein:

the graphics file comprises a plurality of images each corresponding to a different state of the user interface; and

the plurality of images defines substantially all visible portions of the window.

16. The computer system of claim 15 wherein at least one of the group consisting of the graphics file and the configuration file is dynamically updated by a server computer coupled to the computer system.

10058097-01E902